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WAR AS A BUSINESS PROBLEM

BY ALLEYNE IRELAND

TIME was when war was a matter of waving plumes, of shining armor, of rough and tumble combat, in which muscle counted for more than brains, and the problems of commissariat, transport, and supply never troubled the mind of noble, gentle, or serf. When the wars were small they were family affairs. His Lordship gathered about him the Armstrongs, the Smiths, the Carters, the Archers, the Lightfoots, the Seamans, the Hardys, the Sturdees, the Swifts, the Doughtys, and their like, and joined issue with his neighbor.

When the wars were larger it was a case of a tribe fighting a tribe, a people a people. Ferocious as these conflicts were, they had this to commend them—it was seldom necessary to fight a second war in order to find out who had won the first.

It was not in such family or tribal wars that militarism had its roots. It was the exigencies of peace which demanded that, in the interest of agriculture and industry, the business of fighting should be turned over to a small body of specialists who would relieve the majority from all military duties; and out of this demand grew the profession of arms.

Warfare then settled down into a duel between trained armies, the populace at large accepting the fate determined for it on the field of battle, and taking little part in the fighting. It was not until Napoleon's day that war again assumed the character of a struggle between peoples; and after a comparatively brief period it passed again into the hands of a small military caste.

In the nineteenth century the growth of industrialism and the increase of trade turned men's thoughts toward the arts of peace, and Europe entered upon an era of material prosperity during which the idea of war on a vast scale ceased to be repugnant to the man in the street only because it had become ridiculous.

The oratorical barrage which advanced steadily just ahead of the army of Parliamentary reform in England had the double effect of raising in the public mind engaging visions of a world to be ruled, willy nilly, by the good-will of a genial electorate, and of blinding the country to the temptation offered by its wealth and territory to any nation whose leaders, however mistakenly from the moral standpoint, should adopt the arm and not the tongue as the engine of achievement.

The Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, the Franco-Prussian War, universal military training by the continental powers, the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War—none of these, nor all of them together, sufficed to disturb England's complacent reliance upon sea-power as her only ready weapon on a hemisphere seething with military preparation.

And what of the United States? Not only had she these examples to teach her that the night of war was not drawing toward the dawn of peace, but she was also afforded for her guidance nearer and more terrible warnings. She saw the value of treaties proved by the ravishment of Belgium, she saw the price of military unpreparedness paid by England with a mounting tide of blood and treasure, she saw international law appraised at its practical worth by the man who sank the *Lusitania*, she saw that war was no longer a duel between military castes, that it had again become a struggle between peoples.

Between the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the declaration by Congress that a state of war existed with Germany, nearly two years elapsed. "We waited," says Mr. George Creel,¹ Chairman of the Committee on Public Information appointed by President Wilson, "we waited until every fair-minded citizen of our peace-loving democracy was aware that peace was impossible before we reluctantly began to prepare to defend ourselves."

I leave it to Mr. Creel to explain, if he cares to do so, whether in the above passage he is describing the Administration or the fair-minded citizenry as having waited until everybody had become convinced that war was inevitable before it *reluctantly began to prepare to defend the country*.

That there has been a reluctance to throw the full weight of the nation into the war at the earliest possible moment,

¹*The Independent*, March 30, 1918

that our activities have been guided too much by the idea of defence and too little by that of defiance, are criticisms which have usually been condemned as reflecting upon the honor of the United States and upon the sincerity of the President; but the words I have quoted are taken from "The Seventh Message from the United States Government to the American People."

So far as these causes have been advanced, outside of officialdom, to account for the wide discrepancy which exists between what we promised for our first year in the war and what we have performed, I believe the argument to be ill-founded. The real source of our difficulties lies much deeper than the superficial and temporary delusion that the world can be made safe for democracy by reluctant preparation and defensive strategy.

It lies in our failure to distinguish between those problems which are in their nature political and those which are executive. "It arises," says an editorial in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for March, "from our national habit of regarding administration as the twin brother of politics. We have placed ourselves between these two figures and, through trying for a century and a half to keep one eye fixed on each, we have acquired that governmental squint which makes it impossible for us to see right in front of us the area of confused aim and conflicting interest which is the breeding ground of political corruption and administrative inefficiency."

Nobody, so far as I am aware, has suggested that political corruption has been in any measurable degree responsible for the vexatious impediments which have balked our war measures of their full success; but of administrative inefficiency there have been many specific charges, and some official admissions.

Administration as a non-political function of government is a conception unfamiliar to the American mind; and I propose to describe in outline how administrative problems appear to the eye of a man who has spent twenty years in studying those forms of government in which administration is conducted on a non-political basis. I have observed in actual operation ten distinct forms of government which conform to this condition. They are the Crown Colony System in various British Colonies; the Central Government of India; the Indian Provincial System in Burma;

THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT

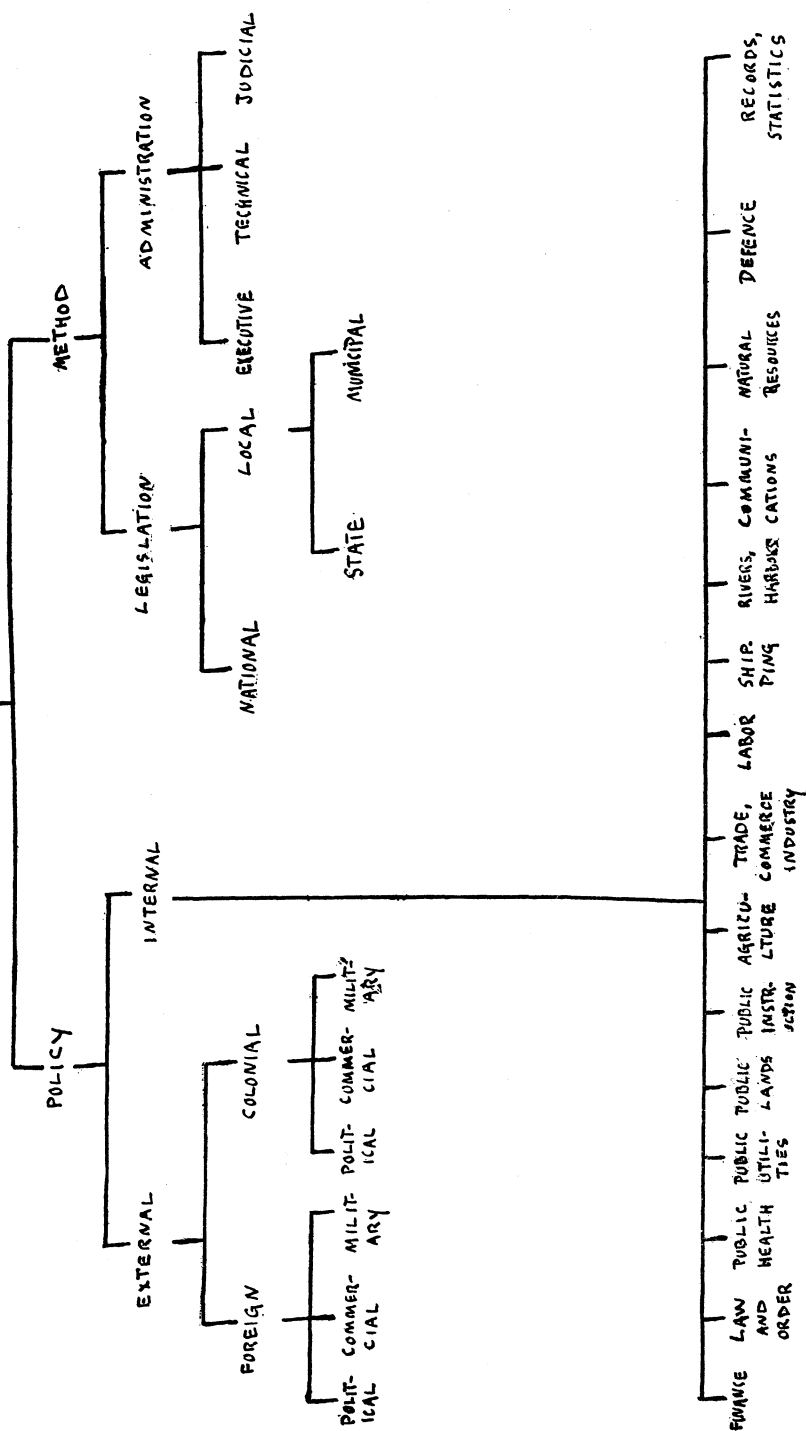


CHART A

the System of Protected Native States in the Malay Peninsula; the Government of a Commercial Company in Borneo; the Rule of an Independent White Raja in Sarawak; the early American Government in Mindanao; Limited Parliamentary Government in British Guiana and Barbados; the French Colonial System in Indo-China; and the Dutch Colonial System in Java.

In the countries I have named there are administered the public affairs of more than 300,000,000 people. Although these governments have been constantly attacked on the ground of their lack of a popular political element, it is the general verdict of those who have observed them in action that, leaving political participation aside, they furnish this vast population with a larger measure of the tangible fruits of good government than is enjoyed by any people under the more "liberal" constitutions of Europe and America.

If the reader will turn to Chart A he will see set forth in a simple diagram the Business of Government. The headings under "Policy—Internal" are not quite complete, because the size of the page forbade the inclusion of more detail, but they suffice to give a view of most of the matters with which modern government is concerned in its internal administration.

Now, the only important respect in which a political government differs from a non-political government in regard to any matter presented in Chart A under the head of Policy is that in the one case Policy is decided ultimately by the opinion of voters, and in the other by the judgment of administrators. If, for instance, the Policy to be settled is whether Communications—railroads, telegraph, telephone, etc.—should or should not be owned and operated by the government, the decision would be reached in the United States by Congress, subject to the veto of the President, whereas in India it would be reached by the Viceroy, after consultation with his Council, subject to the veto of the Secretary of State for India.

The influence exerted upon Policy by the one and by the other of these two modes of procedure differs profoundly. In the United States the matter is decided, initially, by some hundreds of men, few having any special knowledge of the point at issue, and many having strong political motives for taking a particular view; in India the matter is decided, initially, by six men, each of whom is a trained and expe-

rienced administrator, and none of whom has any electorate to please, any powerful business interest to placate, or any political party to support. In the former instance the veto rests with one man who may have no more than an amateur's acquaintance with the question involved; in the latter the veto also rests with one man; but this man is, in practice, guided by the advice of the India Council, a body of from ten to fourteen men, sitting in London, composed, as to the majority, of ex-Indian officials of long service and varied administrative experience.

It is not, however, in relation to the manner in which Policy is settled, but in relation to how it is carried out that the practice of the non-political governments offers an example which, if we followed it, would enormously enhance the efficiency of our participation in the war.

I may here anticipate the objection that there is no lesson to be drawn by a self-governing Democracy from the experience of countries ruled, as it were, by executive decree. Before the reader decides to sustain this objection he should give due weight to two considerations: one that the President now wields a personal power quite as sweeping as that of a Viceroy; the other that the moral I hope to point concerns only the carrying out of a policy after it has been formulated, a matter upon which the question of origin can have no bearing whatever.

The general problem to which I address myself is the part to be played by the civil government in carrying out plans decided upon by the military authorities, or by whoever determines Policy and has the final power to demand service—in other words, the problem of mobilizing all the resources of the country so that they may be made instantly available for military purposes.

It will be noted that in the center of Chart B is the word Administration. I may begin, then, by naming the administrative bureaus which should be created as soon as war has been decided upon.

1. A Department of Control and Direction.
2. A Bureau of Transportation.
3. A Bureau of Shipping Administration.
4. A Bureau of Fuel Administration.
5. A Bureau of Port Administration.
6. A Bureau of Food Administration.
7. A Bureau of Supplies.

8. A Bureau of Labor.
9. A Bureau of Law and Legislation.
10. A Bureau of Information on Resources.

The Director General of the Department of Control and Direction should issue all the general orders upon which the Bureaus would act. There should be attached to the Department a Deputy-Director of each of the Bureaus, thoroughly posted on the work of his own Bureau. These Deputy-Directors would form a corps of liaison officers whose duty it would be to furnish information to the Director General, to discuss among themselves every question in which the demands of one Bureau threatened to conflict with the demands of another, and to reduce to the smallest possible number and to formulate in the most concise manner those points in regard to which an irreconcilable conflict of judgment made it necessary to seek a decision from the Director General.

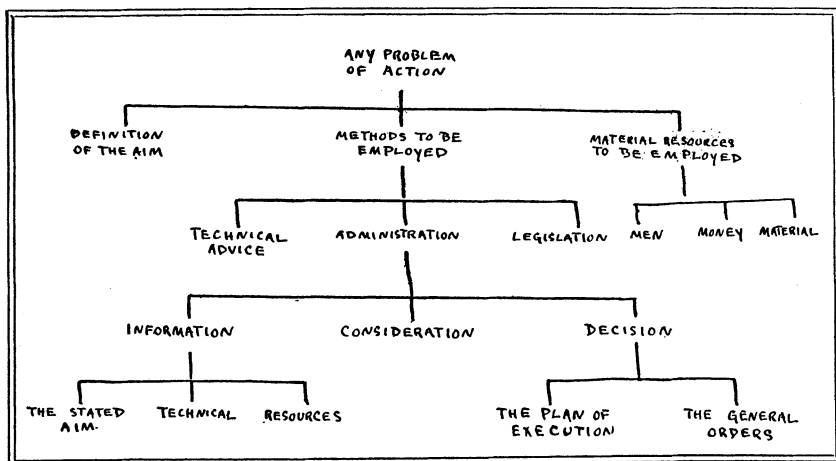


CHART B

I may explain that the Bureau of Information on Resources would be engaged in the collection, from every available source *except the other Bureaus*, of every kind of statistical data, and in their systematic arrangement. This Bureau would need as its Director a professional statistician of recognized authority. The Bureau would serve as an independent check on the figures supplied to the Director General by the other Bureaus—a most important function.

Let the reader now place himself in the position of the Director General of Control and Direction, and assume that he has been asked by the war authority to arrange for the shipment to France of fifty thousand tons of coal a week. In connection with what follows, the reader should have Chart B under his eye.

The "Aim" having been defined, the Director General will require certain information upon which to construct his "Plan of Execution" and to issue his "General Orders." From Bureau 2 he will receive a report on transportation, with suggestions as to how any deficiency can be met; from Bureau 3 a report on available shipping, with suggestions; from Bureau 4 a report on available coal, with suggestions; from Bureau 5 a report on loading at the ports, with suggestions; from Bureau 10 a report to be used in checking the figures furnished in the other reports.

The reports from 2, 3, 4, and 5 would be exchanged between the Bureaus concerned so that they could be discussed at a meeting of the Deputy-Directors of these Bureaus (the liaison officers) for the purpose of drawing up a liaison report on matters where coördinate action was needed; such, for instance, as the train schedule on which the coal would be delivered at the ports of loading—a question to be discussed jointly by the Deputy-Directors of Transportation, Shipping, and Port Administration.

When the Director General has before him the reports to which I have referred above he is in possession of everything embraced under "Information" in Chart B. He knows the "Aim"; under "Technical" he has his information on movement; under "Resources" he has his information about the material (coal) to be moved; he has his liaison report and his checking report on figures.

The "Decision" now waits upon his "Consideration." He may find it necessary to call in "Technical Advice" to aid him in finally determining a point raised in the liaison report, to consult the Bureau of Labor as to workmen called for by the Bureau reports, or the Bureau of Law and Legislation as to existence or the need of authority to commandeer men or materials. He will, finally, be in a position to draw up his "Plan of Action," which should be supplied in full, with his "General Orders," to each Bureau concerned.

From this point onward the execution of the "Aim" demands no more than the ordinary abilities of managers

and superintendents, each of whom should receive written orders—the former from the Bureau Director concerned, the latter from the manager.

The limits of a short article have not allowed me to do more than deal in outline with the broad, general aspect of administrative technique. The largest problems as well as the smallest are amenable to a similar treatment. The scheme which I have outlined does not mean, necessarily, that the Aim will be accomplished. The coal mines may be blown up or flooded, blizzards may tie up the railroads, submarines may sink the ships before they reach port. What the scheme does insure is of the utmost importance:

1. It will enable the Military Authority to know whether, uncontrollable circumstances apart, the Aim can be carried out in whole or in part.

2. It will eliminate confusion of plan, and conflict of authority as causes of failure.

3. It will concentrate the strategy of the Aim in the hands of a few men of exceptional ability, and distribute its tactics among a large number of men whose talents suffice for the carrying out of orders.

4. It will enable the Director General of Control and Direction to diagnose failure and to prescribe the proper remedy.

It is, perhaps, superfluous to add that no administrative scheme can be employed as a substitute for brains. What a schematic, non-political treatment of administrative problems can do is to promote clear thinking, prevent confused action, aid judgment, and fix responsibility.

All this simply means that every non-combatant problem in war is neither more nor less than a business problem, and that it can be solved by sound business methods.

ALLEYNE IRELAND.